



221 Still A Pawn

Hades 1

I paced about the room, sweat on my brow, my emotions a whirlwind of chaos and worry. "It keeps happening. These... fucking..." I ran my hand through my hair, exhaling through clenched teeth. "Nosebleeds."

"Finding her wolf again will definitely have its effects on her, both physiologically and psychologically. She is already throwing cunts— I mean, people— through walls. It will, of course, have its setbacks. You can't stress her, though. Treat her, pamper her like a baby," Amelia said sternly. 1

I cut the call.

Keeping her relaxed meant that no one could know. By the time Felicia unhinged her jaws and began to gossip after Eve handed her ass to her twice, there would be only speculation— no confirmation— until it was time. She had to heal. Just as Jules' death had destroyed her, confronting her parents would have drained her.

I glanced at her where she slept on the bed, her breathing slightly uneven. I listened to it, watching her chest rise and fall. She would not be touched. Not anymore.

The flux made itself known, as it always did when it sensed my thoughts. Eve would no longer be the key. I would. Vassir's Vein— the malignant essence of the Vampire Prince, Vassir, Elysia's mate, and the father of Lycans— was immune to the Lunar Cataclysm.

My father's main goal in infecting me with the essence that created the flux beneath my skin— that replaced my heart— was to forge a being that could withstand the effects of the Lunar Cataclysm. Vassir had been a vampire, and the moon and its phases mostly affected wolves.

But this immunity only existed when I was in my flux form— when I was a mutated Lycan with three heads and fur as dark as void and shadow. That was the only time I was immune. Outside of that, I would succumb.

So, just like Eve, I carried fluid and marrow that could be harvested for Obsidian. It would be anything but easy, yet nothing was worth losing



her— even if death was almost a certainty.

I had it plotted out in my mind already. I would continue to undergo procedures. I would heal, and then another extraction would occur. This cycle would repeat for the next eighteen months. By then, we would have enough of a shield.

I would be weakened.

The effects of the flux-tainted immunity serum on the general population could be unpredictable at best— catastrophic at worst. Siphoning the flux— my own cursed lifeblood— into something that could shield Obsidian from the Lunar Cataclysm was as desperate as it was logical.

But logic did not always mean certainty.

One thing, however, was certain.

Eve would never be touched again.

I was prepared to die for that.

I had only one goal, after all— vengeance against all who had harmed her, and retribution upon all those who would pose a threat to the pack she would rule as its Luna.



Even if I was not by her side.

The thought settled like an anvil— heavy and painful.

My gaze remained transfixed on the woman who had become the center of my war, the axis on which all my decisions turned. Even before I had realized it.

My phone buzzed, the vibration a low, insistent pulse against my palm. The moment the name flashed across the screen— Montegue— the tension in my skull worsened, the migraine clawing deeper into the back of my head.

I exhaled sharply, pressing my thumb and forefinger against my temple before accepting the call.

"Your Majesty," Montegue's voice came low and conspiratorial through the speaker.

I didn't respond immediately. My gaze remained on Eve's sleeping form. The sight of her— fragile yet strong even in rest— was the only thing anchoring me from the chaos threatening to unravel.



But Montegue wasn't one to wait for pleasantries. "The princess's calcium supplements seem to be excellent. Felicia won't stop talking about her assault."

I knew what he was getting at.

"Or is it what I think? Does the council need to set an impromptu date for our next meeting?" He was baiting me, trying to get me to slip.

"Your daughter exaggerates," I said, my voice even, though my patience was thinning.

Montegue let out a low chuckle. "She does, but she isn't blind. And neither am I."

I pinched the bridge of my nose. The migraine clawed deeper, the pressure behind my eyes intensifying. Montegue had never been one to dance around an issue, but he enjoyed baiting his prey— luring them into a conversation on his terms.

"You're pressing, Montegue," I said coldly. "If you have something to say, say it."

There was a pause— a deliberate stretch of silence that made my grip on the phone tighten.



Then, his voice dropped lower.

"Is the Fenrir marker in her blood fully developed for the extractions to begin?"

I have not even marked her.

It was a lie. A smooth, measured one.

"You seem to be jumping ahead of yourself."

Montegue let out a slow exhale, the kind that held the weight of amusement and skepticism.

"Oh? Now, that is interesting." His voice dipped into something dangerously knowing.

I could almost picture him— leaned back in his chair, fingers steepled, a smirk curling at the corner of his lips. Montegue was no fool, nor was he easily manipulated. If he was asking, he already had suspicions.

"Then humor me, Your Majesty," he said, tone light but laced with intent. "If you haven't marked her, then what exactly is Felicia seeing? Because from what I hear, Eve is stronger. Faster. More... aggressive." 2

I said nothing.



Silence stretched between us, thick with unspoken truths. I knew Montegue well enough to recognize what he was doing— laying traps within traps, waiting for me to step wrong.

"Careful, Montegue. Are you accusing me of something?" My voice came out sharper than I intended, but I didn't correct it.

Montegue had always been too damn perceptive for his own good. He was circling the truth like a predator tasting the air, and I could not afford for him to sink his teeth into it.

I exhaled, running a hand through my hair, my patience running thin. "Eve is healing. That is all there is to it. But if you or your daughter continue stirring unnecessary speculation, you may force my hand in ways you will not like." 4

Montegue chuckled, and it grated against my already fraying nerves. "Ah, there it is. The true voice of our king. Threats instead of answers. You wound me, Hades."

"Then consider it a warning," I said coldly.

Montegue was a paradox— sometimes light but ominous, empathic but sharp, filled with humor



but always carrying an undertone of suspicion.

His voice shifted to something more severe. "Do not forget your vow to me. She remains a pawn until the job is done."

"She remains a pawn. I never forgot." The words were bitter, so bitter I grimaced. "For Danielle." 1

With that, the call ended.

Eve

His words tore through me with such brutal finality that, for a moment, I forgot to breathe. 2

I had been teetering on the edge of consciousness, lulled by the sound of his pacing, by the tension that radiated from him like a second skin. I had felt the weight of his gaze on me, the way his breathing slowed when he watched me— as if reassuring himself that I was still there. Still his.

But then— those words.

"She remains a pawn."

"I never forgot."



"For Danielle."

My mind latched onto them, twisting them over and over, trying to find another meaning. But they wouldn't change. They were what they were — a bitter promise. A truth I wasn't supposed to hear.

The call had ended. The silence stretched, deep and suffocating.

I kept my breath steady, kept my body still, but inside, I was shaking.

James' words resonated in my head like a gong. 3

No, no, no.

I had to know.

I had to find out what truth lay within the memory card. 1